

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 00343 01 OF 02 061248Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13
DHA-02 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 SIL-01 LAB-04
(ISO) W

-----061655Z 075621 /43

P 061050Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2018

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION NATO

AMCONSUL MUNICH

USUN NEW YORK 0514

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRAGUE 0343

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CZ, SCSE, SHUM

SUBJECT: CHARTER 77 -- INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH, AS WE HAVE NOTED PREVIOUSLY, DOMESTIC EFFECTS

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PAGE 02 PRAGUE 00343 01 OF 02 061248Z

ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA OF THE CHARTER 77 CONTROVERSY HAVE BEEN LIMITED,
THE EXTERNAL EFFECTS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN A PUBLIC RELATIONS DISASTER
FOR THE REGIME, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN. THIS MESSAGE SURVEYS
CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THREE MAIN AREAS: REACTIONS OF WESTERN GOV-
ERNMENTS, IMPACT ON EUROCOMMUNISTS, AND VIEWS OF OTHER COMMUNIST
COUNTRIES. END SUMMARY.

2. WESTERN GOVERNMENTS: FOREIGN MINISTER CHNOUPEK FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS HAS WITH SKILL AND PERSEVERANCE CARRIED ON A CAMPAIGN TO WIN LEGITIMACY AND RESPECTABILITY FOR THE HUSAK REGIME. ALTHOUGH HE HAS HAD TO BEAR WITH CONTINUED CRITICISM FROM SOME SEGMENTS OF THE WESTERN PRESS--E.G., BERNARD LEVIN'S ACID COMMENTARIES IN THE LONDON TIMES--HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN CARRYING OUT EXCHANGES OF VISITS WITH AN IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF NONCOMMUNIST FOREIGN MINISTERS AND HAS BUILT A GAUDY ARRAY OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS TO DEMONSTRATE INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE POST-1968 CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP. THE AGREEMENTS REMAIN, BUT THE CURRENT STRUCTURE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS IN TATTERS.

3. WHEN THE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER FELT OBLIGED, BECAUSE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLE HERE, TO CANCEL HIS PLANNED STOPOVER IN PRAGUE EN ROUTE HOME FROM THE USSR, HE BEGAN A TREND THAT HAS YET TO RUN ITS COURSE. NORWAY HAS THIS PAST WEEK CANCELLED AN IMPORTANT EXCHANGE OF MINISTERIAL VISITS AND, IN SO DOING, POSTPONED SIGNING OF A BILATERAL ECONOMIC AGREEMENT. AND SEVERAL OTHER ANTICIPATED VISITS ARE IN DOUBT--INCLUDING A SCHEDULED VISIT BY PREMIER STROUGAL TO AUSTRIA IN MARCH AND TRIPS BY DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER SPACIL TO SWEDEN IN FEBRUARY AND FRANCE IN MARCH. IN THESE LATTER VISITS NONE APPEARS TO WANT TO TAKE THE ONUS FOR CANCELLATION, AS BELGRADE 77 APPROACHES. HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THAT ANY OF THE PARTIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED WANTS THE TREATMENT WHICH MUST BE EXPECTED FROM THE LIBERAL AUSTRIAN AND SWEDISH PRESS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS, IF THE VISITS TO VIENNA AND STOCKHOLM MATERIALIZE. FOR THEIR PART, THE CZECHOSLOVAKS WOULD PROBABLY PREFER TO GO THROUGH WITH SCHEDULED VISITS, NO MATTER HOW UNPLEASANT THE ATMOSPHERE, IN ORDER TO KEEP UP A PRETENSE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PRAGUE 00343 01 OF 02 061248Z

RESPECTABILITY.

4. THE EFFECTS ON DETENTE OF CHARTER 77 AND OF WESTERN REACTION, PARTICULARLY IN THE US, TO THE REGIME'S EFFORTS HERE TO STIFLE THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS REMAIN TO BE DETERMINED. IT SEEMS SAFE TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT WESTERN OPPONENTS OF DETENTE HAVE GAINED AMMUNITION.

5. EUROCOMMUNISM: OPPONENTS OF THE EUROCOMMUNIST PARTIES, ESPECIALLY IN ITALY AND FRANCE, HAVE ALSO GAINED NEW AMMUNITION TO ATTACK THE EUROCOMMUNISTS' DENIAL OF TOTALITARIAN AMBITIONS. NEW CRACKS HAVE DEVELOPED IN OVERALL COMMUNIST UNITY, AS SHARP DEBATE HAS OCCURRED IN THE PCI AND PCF OVER THE ATTITUDE TO TAKE ON CHARTER 77. BERLINGUER'S VIEWS ON HUSAK AND COMPANY MUST BE LESS THAN CHARITABLE. AND MOSCOW MUST FIND EXASPERATING THE UNDERMINING OF ITS WORK AT THE BERLIN ECPC LAST SUMMER.

6. OTHER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES: THE SOVIET POSITION ON CHARTER 77 APPEARS TO BE ONE OF MANEUVERING TO MINIMIZE PROPAGANDA SETBACKS,

WHILE PLACING HIGHEST PRIORITY ON MAINTAINING STABILITY IN ITS CZECHOSLOVAK FIEFDOM. THE CHINESE AND ALBANIANS SEEM TO ENJOY POINTING OUT THAT EVENTS MERELY PROVE WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN SAYING SINCE 1968 ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF THE PRAGUE REGIME AND TOTAL SOVIET CONTROL OF IT.

7. THE REAL PROBLEM FOR MOSCOW MAY BE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CURRENT STRUGGLE FOR GREATER FREEDOM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA ON NEIGHBORING EE COUNTRIES -- PARTICULARLY POLAND AND THE GDR, WHICH ALREADY HAVE DISSIDENT FERMENT OF THEIR OWN. THE CHARACTER OF THE FERMENT AND THE CONDITIONS PRODUCING IT ARE, OF COURSE, DIFFERENT IN EACH CASE, BUT SOME INTERACTION AND CONTAGION ARE INEVITABLE --E.G. THE HUNGARIAN INTELLECTUALS' EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FOR CHARTER 77. THERE IS ALSO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN, POINTED OUT IN BUUAPEST'S VERY INTERESTING 0371 (NOTAL), THAT CLUMSY HANDLING OF SUCH ISSUES IN ONE COUNTRY MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR OTHER, MORE LIBERAL, REGIMES TO UNDERTAKE FURTHER RELAXATION
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PAGE 04 PRAGUE 00343 01 OF 02 061248Z

OF CONTROLS WITHOUT INVITING SOVIET WRATH. WHEN A LIBERALIZATION

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 00343 02 OF 02 061228Z
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2019

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PRAGUE 0343

PROCESS IS HALTED, THWARTED EXPECTATIONS CAN CAUSE INTERNAL PRESSURES AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF DISSIDENT OUTBURSTS TO INCREASE. IN ANY CASE, SOVIET HOPES OF MUTING DISCUSSION OF BASKET 3 AT BELGRADE HAVE CERTAINLY SUFFERED A SERIOUS BLOW, WHICH MAY BE PARTIALLY OFFSET, HOWEVER, IF YUGOSLAVIA'S OWN DEFICIENCIES IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PRAGUE 00343 02 OF 02 061228Z

HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD FORCE IT TO MOVE CLOSER TO SOVIET POSITIONS AT THE CSCE FOLLOW-UP MEETING (BELGRADE 701 NOTAL).

8. COMMENT: POSSIBLY, THE HUSAK REGIME HAS BECOME A SORT OF TYPHOID MARY OF EASTERN EUROPE. CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S OWN STABILITY SEEMS LITTLE AFFECTED BY ITS INTERNAL DISSIDENCE, BUT THE EFFORT TO STIFLE ADVOCATES OF GREATER FREEDOM MAY HAVE DESTABILIZING EFFECTS ON NEIGHBORING EE STATES. IT ALSO SEEMS POSSIBLE THAT THE HUSAK LEADERSHIP IS COUNTING ON A FADING OWESTERN INTEREST TO PERMIT IT TO ESCAPE WITH MINIMAL DAMAGE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL REVERBERATIONS OVER CHARTER 77. THE INITIAL FUROR APPEARS TO BE OVER, FOLLOWING STATEMENTS OF DISAPPROVAL IN WASHINGTON, LONDON, AND OTHER MAJOR WORLD CAPITALS, AND THE CHARTER ACTIVISTS HAVE BEGUN TO TAKE A LOWER PROFILE. THE REGIME NO DOUBT HOPES THAT A NEW INTERNATIONAL ISSUE WILL ERUPT AND TAKE THE SPOTLIGHT AWAY FROM DEVELOPMENTS HERE-- THEN COMMUNIST CZECHOSLOVAKIA COULD RETURN TO BUSINESS AS USUAL. BYRNE

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